

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1449

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGSPGOV, PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN

1. IN AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "WHO IS RABIN, WHAT IS HE?" YOEL MARCUS WROTE IN HAARETZ MAY 12 ABOUT THE OPINIONS AND THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER RABIN IN ISRAELI POLITICS. MARCUS SAID HIS ASSESSMENT WAS DRAWN FROM "A HIGHLY PLACED INSIDER", AN INDICATION THAT THE INTERVIEW MAY HAVE COME FROM THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF. THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF THE EMBASSY'S INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF THE ARTICLE:

2. BEGIN TEXT: QADOUM/ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. QADOUM, HE FEELS, IS NOT IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT AND CAUSE AN ENORMOUS, POINTLESS QUARREL WITHIN THE ALIGNMENT. RABIN'S OPINIONS ABOUT SETTLEMENT IN THE TERRITORIES ARE QUITE CLEAR: SETTLEMENTS WILL NOT DETERMINE BORDERS, SO THEY SHOULD NOT BE TURNED INTO ISSUES TO AGONIZE OVER. PUTTING UP SETTLEMENTS MAKES SENSE IN PLACES WHICH, IN THE VIEW OF THE LARGE CABINET MAJORITY, ARE NOT TO BE ABANDONED--AND IT IS ONLY OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AND ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS THAT RABIN HAS SAID THAT "WE DO NOT SET UP SETTLEMENTS IN ORDER

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TO ABANDON THEM LATER."

3. AUTHORITY OVER LABOR PARTY. WHEN THE DUST SETTLES DOWN, RABIN MAY FIND A WORSE TEST STILL AHEAD; BUT AT LEAST, #THE FOCUS OF THE ISSUE HAS BEEN SHIFTED FROM THE TERRITORIAL PROBLEM TO THAT OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY. AND WHEN IT COMES TO AUTHORITY, RABIN IS OT WORRIED. HE IS SURE HE CAN MAKE HIS PARTY TOE THE LINE AS WELL AS ANY PRIME MINISTER BEFORE HIM....GOLDA'S AUTHORITY IS SOMEWHAT OF A LEGEND; TO A LARGE DEGREE, SHE WAS THE CAPTIVE OF DAYAN, WHO SET THE TONE OF HER GOVERNMENT'S POLICY. RABIN IS NOT SIMILARLY DEPENDENT ON PERES: FOR ONE, RAFI IS NOT WHAT IT WAS AND WOULD BE LOST IF IT SHOULD HAVE TO LET THE DEFENSE MINISTRY GO.

4. AUTHORITY WITHIN ALIGNMENT. HE IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT KEEPING THE ALIGNMENT IN LINE EITHER--TRUE, HIS ATTEMPT TO LUMP THE SOCIAL SERVICES IN A SINGLE MINISTRY MISCARRIED, BUT THAT, RABIN SAYS, WAS NOT AN ALIGNMENT MATTER: HE HAD MISCALCULATED THE LENGTH TO WHICH THE NRP WOULD GO TO OPPOSE IT.

5. WEST BANK POLITICAL SITUATION. THE WEST BANK IS TURNING EXTREMIST TO A SEIOUS DEGREE AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE NEW MAYORS WILL BE SUITABLE PARTNERS FOR AN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE. THE ONLY LEADERSHIP THE WEST BANK WILL TRUST IS A LEADERSHIP OUTSIDE THE AREA WHERE ISRAEL'S WRIT RUNS.

6. U.S.- ISRAELI RELATIONS AND RABIN'S RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS. WHAT RABIN HAS PARTICULAR FEELINGS ABOUT IS THE WAY HIS TRIP TO THE U.S. HAS BEEN DRAGGED THROUGH THE MUD. THE TRIP WAS A SUCCESS IN EVERY RESPECT AND RESULTED IN FULL COORDINATION OF POSITIONS WITH PRESIDENT FORD. RABIN'S FEELING IS THAT ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT HAVE A CONSIDER-ABLE SHARE IN THE POOR RELATIONS BETWEEN RABIN AND THE PRESS. THE INCESSANT CRITICISM OF RABIN IN THE NEWSPAPERS IS BEING FED BY THOSE ELEMENTS. NO OTHER PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN IN A SIMILAR SITUATION. WHENRABIN VISITS FACTORIES AND SETTLEMENTS, THE MOOD IS CORDIAL, IF NOT WARM. IT IS THE PRESS RATHER THAN RABIN THAT IS OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE PUBLIC.

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7. NOT THAT THE PUBLIC HAS ALREADY GOT OVER THE SHOCK OF THE OCTOBER WAR; IT STILL TENDS TO OVER REACT HYSTERICALLY. THAT GOES PARTICULARLY FOR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.; RELATIONS WITH WASHINGTON ARE COORDINATED,AND AID HAS REACHED UNPRECEDENTED HEIGHTS. THERE WAS NO REASON TO PANIC ABOUT THE SCRANTON SPEECH--THERE HAVE BEEN WORSE--OR ABOUT THE FIFTH QUARTER AID. GOLDA CAME BACK FROM THE U.S. WITH THE ROGERS PLAN IN THE

BACKGROUND AND WAS APPLAUDED. RABIN RETURNS WITH FULL COORDINATION WITH FORD AND IS HOUNDED BY THE PRESS.

8. NOT THAT 1977 WILL NOT BE A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR ISRAEL-U.S. RELATIONS, MAINLY BECAUSE THERE WILL BE PRESSURE TO INCLUDE THE PLO IN AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. BUT RABIN BELIEVES ISRAEL IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD OUT, EVEN IF THE U.S. TURNS OFF THE TAP FOR A WHILE. IN THE SPHERE OF U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS, TWO BASIC FACTS MUST NEVER BE LOST SIGHT OF: A) THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE AND SECURITY WILL CONTINUE; THIS ALSO ANSWERS THE QUESTION WHETHER THE U.S. WOULD IMPOSE AN ARMS EMBARGO AT A MOMENT ISRAEL IS FIGHTING FOR ITS LIFE. B) ISRAEL WILL NOT LET GO OF THE U.S. AND REGARDS IT AS A FACT THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE WILL HAVE TO BE DONE ON THE BASIS OF THIS RELATIONSHIP.

9. NEGOTIATIONS WITH ARAB STATES. FOR THE PRESENT, THERE ARE NO PARTNERS FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT ON THE ARAB SIDE, SO THAT THE QUESTIONS OF A PALESTINIAN STATE (RABIN IS AGAINST IT) OR OF A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL TO THE PRE-1967 LINES ARE NOT IMMEDIATE ONES. IN THE ABSENCE OF PARTNERS FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, ISRAEL MUST SEEK A PROTRACTED INTERIM SITUATION IN WHICH ISRAEL WILL CONCEDE TERRITORY IN RETURN FOR AN END TO THE STATE OF WAR.

10. THE END OF WAR PROPOSAL IS NOT DEAD YET, AND IF IT IS DROPPED NOW, IT MAY WELL BE REVIVED LATER. THERE IS AN INTERESTING PROCESS GOING ON IN THE MIDDLE EAST JUST NOW: EGYPT, WHICH IN THE EYES OF SOME ARABS HAS GONE ALONG WITH ISRAEL TOO FAR, IS RECOUPING BY "ADOPTING" THE PLO AND ASAD HAS LOST GROUND IN THE ARAB WORLD BECAUSE OF HIS ENTANGLEMENT IN LEBANON. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO SEE THE TWO WORKING HAND IN HAND AND MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF
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AND END-OF-WAR AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL. END TEXT
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